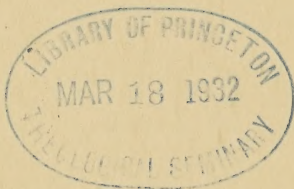


THE GUESTS  
OF GOD

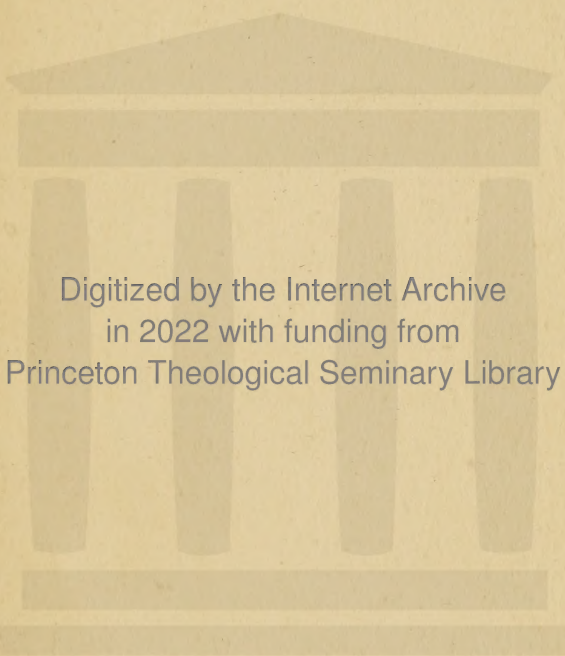


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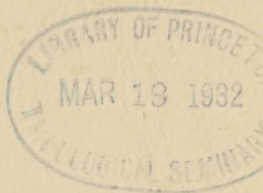
THE GUESTS OF GOD

GEORGE JACKSON



# *The Guests of God*

By  
*George Jackson, D.D.*



"HEAR WHAT COMFORTABLE WORDS  
OUR SAVIOUR CHRIST SAITH UNTO  
ALL THAT TRULY TURN TO HIM."

New  York  
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THE GUESTS OF GOD

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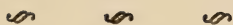
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TO  
DIDSBURY STUDENTS, PAST AND PRESENT  
A REMINDER OF  
SACRED HOURS SPENT TOGETHER  
IN THE COLLEGE CHAPEL



## General Preface



*THE Christian life is a many-sided thing, as many-sided as life itself, since all life is meant to be Christian. It includes belief and conduct; experience and hope; prayer and service; church and home and daily task; the joy of a divine revelation and the upward climb of the loftiest ethic the world has ever known. And according to the history and environment of each soul who tries to live the life are the facets which Christianity reveals and the problems it brings to light. These little books are intended to treat various aspects of this many-sided theme in a brief and interesting way, in a form pleasant to handle and attractive not least to younger readers.*



## *Note*



THE substance of several of the chapters of this little volume was originally spoken at the monthly Communion Service of Staff and Students in the Didsbury College Chapel.

G. J.

DIDSBURY COLLEGE,  
MANCHESTER, *July* 1925.





# Contents

	PAGE
I. "NOT THE LABOUR OF MY HANDS"	1
II. THE GUESTS AT THE FIRST LORD'S SUPPER . . . . .	13
III. THE GUESTS OF GOD . . . . .	25
IV. THE LOVE OF JESUS . . . . .	37
V. THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP . . . . .	49
VI. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF FELLOW- SHIP . . . . .	61
VII. THE AUSTERITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	73
VIII. ATARAXIA . . . . .	85
IX. DOES GOD CARE? . . . . .	95
X. THE BESETTING GOD . . . . .	106
XI. "THINGS PRESENT" . . . . .	119
XII. BURDEN OR BRIDGE? . . . . .	129
XIII. LIVING BY THE FAITH OF OTHERS .	141
XIV. "DEAD ERE HIS PRIME" . . . . .	153
XV. "THE HOVERING ANGEL GIRT WITH GOLDEN WINGS" . . . . .	165



“NOT THE LABOUR OF  
MY HANDS”





## I. " *Not the Labour of My Hands* "

THERE are two ways of thinking about the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, two points of view from which we may approach it. We may come to it from the Divine side, or we may come to it from the human side. It may speak to us of the grace of the Master, or of the response of the disciple. The central thing in it may be something that is ours, or something that is His; the love we feel, or the love we trust. In saying this I do not mean to set the two things over against one another, as if they were mutually exclusive; they are not; indeed we never make the full meaning of the Sacrament our own unless each in its own order and place is present. But it must be in its own order and place; and the first thing in this service is not something that we offer to God, it is something that He brings to us. *As often as ye eat*

## *The Guests of God*

*this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim—what ? Not our own faith, or love, or anything that is ours—ye proclaim the Lord's death.* The accent, that is—and half the blunders in religion are the blunders of the misplaced accent—is on the Divine deed rather than on the human response. The word which in this hour we should hear is not our Lord's searching, probing question, *Lovest thou Me?*—that turns our eyes inward, that throws us back upon ourselves ; rather it is that other word, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us*—that lifts our eyes outward and Godward. And as in the other Sacrament that which we declare first of all is not the faith or feeling of the parents who bring their child for baptism, but rather the good will of our heavenly Father, the grace and authority of Christ, so here, if we would “take this holy Sacrament to our comfort,” we must give the first place not to our thought of God, but to His of us ; not to the love we feel, but to the love we trust.

## “ *Not the Labour of My Hands* ”

### I

This is no mere verbal antithesis. The distinction which I have been trying to suggest cuts very deep. Indeed, in the long run, it involves two conceptions of salvation, of religion, that are as wide apart as the poles. The one finds its centre in man, the other in God. The one makes of the Gospel good advice, the other good news. To the one religion means the straining after a high ideal, the marshalling of the scattered forces of life at the blowing of the trumpets of God ; salvation is something that we win, a wage paid down at the end of the day by the just Overseer of life ; to the other all is *of the Lord's mercies* ; salvation is *the gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Was John Ruskin far wrong when he said that “ the root of almost every schism and heresy from which the Christian Church has ever suffered has been the effort of man to earn rather than receive his salvation ” ? Certain it is this is a distinction in which the whole evan-

## *The Guests of God*

gelical position is at stake. *Works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves*—begin at that end, insist on these as the first things, and, whether they be things ritual or things moral, we are back again in the old, dreary mill-horse round against which Luther's Reformation and Wesley's Revival were the protest, the protest of souls that knew themselves defrauded of their inheritance in Christ.

I have mentioned Wesley, and by way of contrast I may point to two little books of his century which no one can speak of or handle save with gratitude and reverence, and yet which enshrine a conception of religion very different from his. One is the "Prayers and Meditations" of Dr. Johnson. It is a strangely moving little book. Can any one read it and not be touched to the quick by the great, sad sincerity of soul which breathes through its every page, and at the same time without a sigh of regret that there was not some one at hand who could have shown to Johnson a more excellent way? If

## “ *Not the Labour of My Hands* ”

only Toplady could have taught him to sing—

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling,

what a difference it might have made ! Religion would have been a bridge instead of a burden, something to carry him instead of something for him to carry. The other book is Law's "Serious Call." There again is a book to grip and sober a man. "Law cuts to the bone," says Alexander Whyte ; "he seizes and holds all the defiles and dark passes of the heart." Wesley's own debt to him, as every one knows, was immense. Nevertheless, if Wesley had had no more to preach to men than Law's moonlight gospel, there would have been no Evangelical Revival. *Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us* : no other sun has heat enough to grow and ripen a world harvest such as Wesley gathered.



# *The Guests of God*

## II

*Not the labour of my hands*—is not this the constant testimony of the saints ? Open the Bible and read :

Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol ;  
Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to  
see corruption.

“Thine holy one” is not a happy translation ; and the capitals of the Authorised Version still further mislead the reader. The psalmist means himself ; the phrase is parallel to the “my soul” of the previous line ; but it is better to follow the marginal reading of the Revisers and translate, “Thy beloved.” *Thou wilt not suffer him whom Thou lovest to see corruption* : that rests the psalmist’s confidence that death shall not for ever divide him from God, not on something in himself but on something in God. *That disciple whom Jesus loved* : might it not have been, “that disciple who loved Jesus” ? It would have been true. But that which brought strength and gladness to the disciple’s heart was not that his love, however pure and deep, went out to Christ, but

## “ *Not the Labour of My Hands* ”

that Christ's love, in all its wealth and fulness, was poured out upon him. *Now that ye have come to know God*, Paul writes to the Galatians, *or rather*, he goes on, checking and correcting himself, *to be known of God*—— The self-correction is very significant; it seems to reveal the habitual drift of all the apostle's thinking. Religion to him was not a discovery, it was a revelation; not an achievement, but a bestowment.

And when from the saints of the Bible we turn to the saints of the Christian centuries, the testimony is still the same. “I think,” said Cromwell, as he lay upon his deathbed, “I think I am the poorest wretch that lives; but I love God; or rather,” like Paul, checking and correcting himself, “I am beloved of God.”

Not what these hands have done  
Can save this guilty soul;  
Not what this toiling flesh has borne  
Can make my spirit whole.

Thy love to me, O God,  
Not mine, O Lord, to Thee,  
Can rid me of this dark unrest,  
And set my spirit free.

## *The Guests of God*

Horatius Bonar was a Calvinist ; but if that is Calvinism, it is Calvinism set to a music we all may sing. And there are other lines, also from Scotland, which to one man at least have meant more than he can ever tell :

Let me no more my comfort draw  
From my frail hold of Thee ;  
In this alone rejoice with awe,  
Thy mighty grasp of me.

Again and again I have murmured them in the ear of the dying. Once, when I quoted them to a dying soldier, he asked that he might have them in writing. When I saw him next they were under his pillow. When I buried him they were with him in his coffin.

Charles Wesley taught his people to sing :

I hold Thee with a trembling hand,  
But will not let Thee go ;

but for once, at least, the Calvinist had the better of the Arminian, for that which saves is not my trembling hold of Him, but His mighty grasp of me. And this is the truth to remember as we join in this Sacrament. “ We

## *“ Not the Labour of My Hands ”*

do not presume to come to this Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies”—that strikes the note to which all our thoughts should be attuned as we kneel at the holy Table.

Is not this the answer, too, to timid souls that hold back because, they say, they are not worthy? If our merit were our right, all the places at the Table would be empty—all save one. And yet we have a right, and herein is our right: not that we love Him, but that He loves us. We, too, are among the disciples whom Jesus loves; and in this Sacrament, forgetting ourselves and even our sins, remembering only Him, let us assure ourselves again of a love “so amazing that it passes knowledge, but so utterly Divine that it must be true.”

Alexander Whyte often used to tell how once when “Rabbi” Duncan was passing round the bread and wine in a Presbyterian Communion Service, he noticed a woman present who refused to partake, and how,

## *The Guests of God*

leaning along the pew towards her,  
he said in a loud whisper, "Tak' it,  
woman, tak' it: it's for sinners."

Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me;

Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot;

Just as I am—Thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down—  
O Lamb of God, I come.



THE GUESTS AT THE FIRST  
LORD'S SUPPER



## *II. The Guests at the First Lord's Supper*      *~   ~   ~   ~*

THERE are few subjects concerning which there is such general agreement among Christian people as the sacredness and significance of the central rite of our holy faith. We may interpret its significance in very different ways, but, with the exception of the Friends, we all bear witness to it. And yet, as every minister knows, there are in all our congregations—at least this is so in England—large numbers who very rarely join with their fellow-Christians at the Lord's Table. Their absence is due to various causes. It may be they do not quite know where they are in matters of religious belief, and their doubts extend to some things which they suppose to be essential parts of the Christian creed; or, perhaps, they think they are “not good enough” to be reckoned among the declared

## *The Guests of God*

followers of Christ. They feel, and rightly, that to partake of the Sacrament is to commit themselves as they are committed by no other act of Christian worship; and since they doubt their right to make the profession which such an act seems to involve, they abstain altogether. It may be well, therefore, to remind ourselves what manner of men they were whom Jesus invited to be His guests at the first Lord's Supper in the Upper Room at Jerusalem.

### I

Look at the Twelve. How little we know of most of them—of some of them only their names. In part, of course, this is due to the plan of the Gospels. The writers were too busy with Jesus to pay much heed to the men who stood round Him. We have eyes for nobody else when we are in the king's presence. We forget the stars when the sun is up. But that is not the only explanation. Little is told because for the most part there was little to tell. God must

## *The First Lord's Supper*

love commonplace people, Abraham Lincoln used to say—He made so many of them. And such were most of the first disciples—plain, simple men whose “Lives” nobody would ever dream of trying to write: what would there be to say? One of them was a publican, another a revolutionary, four were fishermen, and all of them, apparently, social nobodies. Their thoughts about religion—and those who stay away from the Sacrament because their religious opinions are unsettled should remember this—were as yet vague and unformed; they were vague and unformed even concerning Him whom they loved and followed. If any one had asked them to define their doctrine of “the Person of Christ,” most of them would have had difficulty in understanding what was meant; and if the questioner had gone on to speak about “the Second Person in the Trinity,” Peter might have turned to ask John about last night’s “catch” in order to make the conversation intelligible again.

Further, those twelve men in the

## *The Guests of God*

Upper Room with Jesus—and those who stay away from the Sacrament because they think they are “not good enough” should remember this—were obviously very faulty and imperfect men. The best thing about them was their loyalty to their Master, and even that failed them when the pinch came, and they all forsook Him and fled. James and John were ready to call down fire from Heaven on a Samaritan village that refused Him hospitality; and only a week before the Crucifixion they were scheming with their mother to secure the first places in the kingdom. Thomas was a man of slow and melancholy mind, always anticipating the worst, refusing to be persuaded even of good tidings until they were thrust upon him so that he could not help himself. Peter, whose name stands first in all the lists of the Twelve—not, of course, because of any such “primacy” as Roman Catholicism has ascribed to him, but because qualities like his always bring a man to the front among his fellows—is the most likeable man in the group; but

## *The First Lord's Supper*

the Evangelists make no attempt to paint out the warts in their portrait of him. When his blood is up he hits out wildly, so that once he came near to killing a servant of the high priest. When he is excited and angry he drops his oaths about like any other rough fisherman. And once when he had got himself into what we call "a tight place" he did not stick at downright lying in order to cut himself free.

Such were the men whom Jesus invited to sit down with Him at the first Lord's Supper.

### II

Why, then, were they there? Why had Christ chosen them to be His companions? Why was He willing to spend such time and care on their training? Two reasons may be mentioned.

To begin with, commonplace and ordinary, faulty and imperfect, as the disciples were, they had the root of the matter in them. They were ignorant, but they were teachable,



## *The Guests of God*

and, as every teacher knows, one's chance with a scholar depends not so much upon what he knows already as upon his willingness to learn. And in the good and honest hearts of His disciples Jesus found the good ground in which the seed springeth up and beareth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.

But the chief reason why Jesus called these men to be with Him and to share with Him His last sacramental meal, why He put into their hands the bread and the cup and said to them, *This do in remembrance of Me*, was that He knew that in all at least save one, He could count on their loyalty to Himself. This was the one thing that Jesus really cared about. Given that, He knew that all else would come out right. *Dilige et quod vis fac*—it was St. Augustine's great and daring word—"Love and do what you like." And Jesus was no less bold: *Lovest thou Me?* He asked, and in the disciple's answer found the one thing needful. Always it was this that He sought—the loyalty of loving hearts; and it was this that

## *The First Lord's Supper*

His disciples brought Him. "My knights," King Arthur said,

"are sworn to vows  
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,  
And uttermost obedience to the king."

And in like manner did these men bind themselves to Jesus. Through all the mists of their misunderstandings, through all their fears and failures, love for Him shines like a clear and steadfast star. *Let us also go*, said Thomas, *that we may die with Him*. He could not understand why Jesus must needs go into Judæa again; this only was clear—he had plighted his troth to Him, and he could not go back. In the darkest hour of Peter's life his Lord had turned and looked upon him, and with that look had shamed and saved His disciple: *he went out and wept bitterly*. And in that swift responsiveness of love to love there lay the seed of all true Christian doctrine, of all true Christian morality. To bind men to Himself—that, I repeat, was Christ's supreme care. Some day, perhaps, His Church will be as bold and wise as He, and

## *The Guests of God*

will leave all who love Him free to think and speak the thing they will.

### III

I have been writing of the disciples of the first days, but I have been thinking of the disciples of our own day, and the application to the subject with which we began should be obvious. Look again at that little apostolic band: commonplace men with commonplace faults, yet of them all there was only one who had no right in the Upper Room, no right to hold the holy cup. Love indeed was on the lips of Judas as of the others, but poison was in his heart—better for him that he had never been born. But the rest were in their right place. And to-day if any man will come after Him and will be His disciple it is his right to be there, it is his duty to be there. Do we not owe it to Him thus to confess Him before men? We do indeed read of one who was *a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews*, and we judge no man, but we remember another tremendous

## *The First Lord's Supper*

saying: *Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words—*

“ In memory of My dying love  
Do this ! ” He said, and—died.

Shall we not do it, not because we  
are worthy, but because He bids us ?



THE GUESTS OF GOD





### *III. The Guests of God*      *~      ~*

THE fifteenth Psalm is one of the briefest and simplest in the whole Psalter. It consists simply of a question and its answer. The question may be translated thus :

Lord, who shall be a guest in Thy tent ?  
Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill ?

Then, in the clauses that follow, comes the description of him who is counted worthy to be the guest of God :

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,

And speaketh truth in his heart.

He that slandereth not with his tongue,

Nor doeth evil to his friend,

Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

In whose eyes a reprobate is despised ;

But he honoureth them that fear the Lord.

He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

He that putteth not out his money to usury,

Nor taketh a bribe against the innocent.

He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

## *The Guests of God*

Such is he who is worthy to be admitted to the Divine hospitality, and to enjoy the Divine protection.

### I

It may be said that the Psalmist's answer is very partial and inadequate, that the morality which it inculcates is mainly negative, that not only does it lack the inwardness of New Testament teaching, it falls short of the best ideals even of the Old. There is truth in this ; yet if any man will take the lines of this psalm and apply them one by one as tests of his own life, perhaps the last thing he will be disposed to say of them is that they are inadequate. But let that pass. The real significance of the psalm lies not in its ideal of perfection, but in the way in which it clamps together the two things which man has so often put asunder—religion and ethics. For him who slanders with his tongue, who wrongs his neighbour, who condemns the innocent for gain, whose word does not bind him—for him, says the Psalmist,

## *The Guests of God*

there is no place among the guests of God.

Does any one think that that is a very commonplace and obvious thing to say? Then let him turn to the long history of religion; and whether he read it in the Old Testament, or in the New Testament, or in the Christian centuries, or in his own life, he will see that the world has never had, and has not yet, any harder lesson to learn than this—that a religious man must be a good man. “There is no strange self-deceit,” says Dean Church in one of his great sermons, “more deeply and obstinately fixed in men’s hearts than this: that those whom God favours may take liberties that others may not; that religious men may venture more safely to transgress than others; that good men may allow themselves to do wrong things.” It was a self-deceit like this that seems to have been the root of most of the evils against which the Hebrew prophets never tired of protesting. Men thought that if only they brought their sacrifices, many enough and often enough, God would be on their side,

## *The Guests of God*

and all would be well; they were ready even to bring the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. And they are told that God cares for none of these things, but only for this—that men do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with Him. They trod the Temple courts, repeating in their self-complacency, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these*, while all the time they oppressed the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and were guilty of theft and murder and adultery. And again they are told, *Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit*; one thing only can put them right with God—*amend your ways and your doings*. Isaiah puts it all in one stinging epigram: *iniquity and the solemn meeting*—wickedness and worship—that unblessed union that man has so often managed to bring about, *God cannot away with*.

And while some have sought to find in ritualism a substitute for righteousness, others have sought it in a fervent emotionalism, or in orthodoxy of belief. But again, and always, the

## *The Guests of God*

answer is the same. When Matthew Arnold said that “a company of Cornish revivalists will have no difficulty in tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling God twenty times over to-night, and yet may be none the better for it to-morrow morning,” he was a good deal less than fair to the religion of Cornwall; nevertheless, his finger was on the standing peril of all “revivalism”—the thinness and poverty of its ethical life. And as for orthodoxy of belief, was not “Rabbi” Duncan right when he said that there is only one heresy, and that is Antinomianism? Think what we may of Pope’s famous couplet about “modes of faith,” it is surely true, his can’t be right whose life is in the wrong. *Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing*—ritualism is nothing, and orthodoxy is nothing—but *the keeping of the commandments of God.*

### II

Lord, who shall be a guest in Thy tent?  
Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?

When can the old question be more

## *The Guests of God*

fittingly asked and pondered than when we are preparing our hearts to receive the Holy Communion? It is when we sit at the Lord's Table that we have most need to remind ourselves what manner of men His guests must be. True, at that Table, the guest's first thought should be not of himself, nor of anything that is his, not even of his own unworthiness, but of the grace of the Host who has bidden him come. *Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us*—that is our hope, that is our warrant; but for that we never dare have come at all. But though that is the first word, it is not the last. There are other words which the Lord of the Table speaks to His guests, words that search and sift us the more because they are spoken there and then: *Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. A new commandment I give unto you,*

## *The Guests of God*

*that ye love one another ; even as I have loved you, that ye love one another.* These are the commands of love, and they are not less but more exacting than the commands of law. We may come to the Table and never hear them ; we may leave it and forget them, but the instructed Christian conscience has the law of the guest-chamber always before it. This, for example, is how Thomas à Kempis writes of “ Self-examination before Communion ” :

Above all things, thou oughtest to receive this sacrament with great humility of heart, and lowly reverence.

And, if thou hast time, confess unto God in the secret of thine heart all the miseries of thy disordered passions.

Lament and grieve, that thou are yet so carnal, so worldly, so unmortified as to thy passions ;

So unwatchful over thy outward senses, so often entangled with vain imaginations ;

So quickly distracted, so seldom wholly recollected ;

So suddenly moved to anger, so apt to take displeasure against another, and speak evil of others ;

So prone to judge ;



## *The Guests of God*

So often purposing much good, and yet performing little.

These and other thy defects, being confessed, with full resignation and with thy whole will, offer up thyself a perpetual sacrifice to the honour of My name on the altar of thy heart, faithfully committing thy body and soul unto Me ;

That so thou mayest receive profitably the Sacrament of My body.

Then, after this grave, sweet, clear voice out of the Middle Ages, let us turn to "The Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper" in the Book of Common Prayer. Here is an extract from the Exhortation to be read when "the minister giveth warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion" : "If any of you be a blasphemer of God, a hinderer or slanderer of His word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table ; lest after the taking of that holy Sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction, both of body and soul." Then, when the Com-

## *The Guests of God*

munion is about to be received, the invitation to partake is to them that do truly and earnestly repent of their sins and are in love and charity with their neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways ; after which follows the General Confession. Most significant of all, perhaps, is the place given to the Ten Commandments in the very forefront of the whole service. Many, naturally, prefer to use the higher, Christian law of the Beatitudes, but, whichever be used, the essential significance is the same : the guests of God are subject to the law of God. Here in the central rite of our holy faith, in the very act in which we declare the wonder of the Divine grace, there is laid upon us anew the obligation to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Religion and right doing are not two things, they are one thing : it is the word of the Lord Himself to all who sit with Him at His Table.



# THE LOVE OF JESUS



#### IV. *The Love of Jesus*

HENRY DRUMMOND has told of a young girl whose perfect grace of character was the wonder of those who knew her. She wore on her neck a gold locket which no one was ever allowed to open. One day, in a moment of unusual confidence, one of her companions was allowed to touch its spring and learn its secret. She saw written these words: *Whom having not seen I love.* That was the secret of her beautiful life. And that has always been the Christian secret. The spring of all that is purest and best in the long Christian story is there. This is true both of the individual Christian and of the Christian community. Whatever there is in the past to make us proud of the Christian name—alas that there should be so many things which only make us hang our heads in sadness and in shame!—all finds its explanation

## *The Guests of God*

here: *the love of Christ constraineth us.*

This is, of course, both very familiar and very sacred, which makes a double difficulty for any one who would say anything about it:

this

Nor tongue nor pen can show.

Yet it is always good to think on these unspeakable things, and sometimes even to try to find speech for them, however far short all our words must come.

### I

Once more let us remind ourselves that, as Dr. Denney was never tired of telling us, Christ is the whole of Christianity; He is the whole of it on the Divine side, as the right attitude to Him is the whole of it on the human side. We say sometimes of a man who has mastered a subject through and through that he knows it "from A to Z." In the New Testament Jesus is called "Alpha and Omega." But "Alpha and Omega" are, of course, only Greek for A and Z. So



## *The Love of Jesus*

that to know Christ is to know all that Christianity means ; at least it is to leave out nothing that is essential. Or, to say the same thing in another way, Christianity means, first and last, love to a person. When I invite a man to become a Christian, I am not asking him to put his name at the foot of a creed, to conform to a particular mode of worship, to espouse a cause or to work for an ideal. These things may all come later, but they are not the first things. To be a Christian means—you cannot put it too simply to put it truly—to give oneself in love and loyalty to Jesus.

Are not the master-forces of life always personal ? Let a man look back over his own life and he will see that, whether for good or for ill, he owes most not to principles or ideas but to *somebody*. “ Ideas,” says George Eliot, “ are often poor ghosts ; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them ; they pass athwart us in their vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh ; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft,

## *The Guests of God*

responsive hands, they look at us with sad, sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame." Our literature is full of the same great truth. There is, says Tennyson,

no more subtle master under heaven  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable words,  
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man—

there is no more "subtle master" to  
do all that, says Tennyson,

Than is the maiden passion for a maid.

But that will do it when all the good counsels of the moralist avail nothing—poor, wingless things that fall to the ground unheeded.

Among the many disciples of Mazzini who laid down their lives that Italy might be one and might be free,

## *The Love of Jesus*

one of the earliest and the most beloved was Jacopo Ruffini; and an English poetess has told in simple, moving lines what nerved him to the sacrifice :

O Giuseppe, this shall be my flower,  
That I died first for thee ! No other soul  
Shall come before me to that unlit goal,  
Or take pre-eminence of me of this hour !  
And this shall be my crown through all the days  
Hereafter, when men speak of thee thy due,  
And speak thy name, they will speak my  
name too,  
And say, " Mazzini loved him " ; nay, their  
praise  
Shall yet reach higher, saying all the truth,  
" Better than all the world besides, in youth,  
Mazzini loved him." That remembrance  
holds  
My name in lustre of thy name, and folds  
My spirit in a happy mist of sleep ;  
And not for ever lonely I lie down ;  
For me too in their hearts shall all men keep  
For thy sake,—so shall I have love for crown.

Stronger than all other ties, stronger even than the love of freedom or of Italy, was the love which bound Ruffini to his master. And the whole philosophy of the Christian life lies there : *whom having not seen we love.*

# *The Guests of God*

## II

Let us watch how that great idea has worked in Christian history. Always the mainspring of Christian life and service has been devotion to Jesus ; it is at that source the lamp has been fed.

(1) We go back to the first days : *He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him*—it was so that the Christian Church began. The bond of union was the tie with Jesus. It not only kept the disciples together, it determined everything. When they could be sure of nothing else, this at least was clear—nothing must separate them from their Lord. *If I must die with Thee*, said Peter, *I will not deny Thee* ; and though, as we know, his faith failed, Peter meant what he said—meant it with all the passion of his soul. *Let us also go*, said Thomas, *that we may die with Him*. And the two spoke for the twelve : *as they followed*, on that last sad journey to Jerusalem, *they were afraid* ; but they followed. This was the one thing that Jesus seems to have cared about.

## *The Love of Jesus*

*Follow Me*, He said ; *come unto Me* ; and when to His question, *Lovest thou Me ?* a disciple could answer, *Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee*, on him Jesus was ready to lay all manner of service.

(2) And as it was in the beginning so has it been through the centuries. The friends of Jesus have often quarrelled among themselves, but in a very real sense they have always been one in Him. Listen to Polycarp in the second century : “ Swear,” said his Roman judge, “ and I will set thee at liberty ; renounce the Christ.” “ Eighty and six years have I served Him,” said the old man, “ and He never did me any wrong ; how then can I blaspheme my King, my Saviour ? ” Listen to Thomas à Kempis in the fifteenth century :

What can the world profit thee without Jesus ?

To be without Jesus is a grievous hell ; and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

If Jesus be with thee no enemy shall be able to hurt thee.

He that findeth Jesus findeth a good treasure, yea, a good above all good.

## *The Guests of God*

And he that loseth Jesus loseth overmuch,  
yea, more than the whole world.

Most poor is he who liveth without Jesus ;  
and he most rich who is dear to Jesus.

Listen to the witness of the Christian  
hymn-book—almost any one will do :

Jesu, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast.

That is no voice crying in the wilderness. A hymn-book implies a congregation ; and this congregation is *ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands* ; and Christ is all their song.

(3) It is easier, perhaps, in a matter of this kind to speak of other days than of our own, and of other men than of ourselves ; nevertheless, what has been said of the past is true also of the present. There is a story of some simple, devout villager standing in one of our art galleries, before a moving representation of the Passion of our Lord, and, oblivious of everything save of the love of the Lord who bought him, murmuring aloud, " Bless Him ! I love Him." Well, that is not the way of most of us, we

## *The Love of Jesus*

keep a tighter hold upon ourselves; and yet that is what we too would wish to show if not to say—we love Him.

It was my duty and privilege some time ago to go through the private papers and letters of one who had been distinguished among his fellows for the strength and ardour of his devotion to the cause of the poor. I had known him for many years; I knew something of his glowing zeal, his tireless ingenuity in doing good; yet I was hardly prepared for the passion which, like a sacred fire, still shone in those old, dead records. What was it that fed the ever-burning flame? What was it that held him to the task through the long and difficult years? There is only one answer—*whom having not seen he loved*. He had known in his own heart the love that would not let him go, and his life was his response.





# THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



## V. The Christian Fellowship

“FELLOWSHIP” is one of the great words of the New Testament, as it is also one of the great facts of Christian history. We use it in another form—Communion—as one of the names for the central rite of our faith. And, again, in the familiar word of benediction, *the fellowship of the Holy Spirit* is conjoined with the grace of Christ and the love of God. What does the phrase signify? Not “fellowship with the Holy Spirit”; that is an idea quite foreign to the New Testament; rather it is “fellowship brought about by the Holy Spirit.” As Professor E. F. Scott puts it, in his recent book “The Spirit in the New Testament,” “the Apostle desires for his converts that their relations should be right with God, with Christ, and with one another.” We have used the verse as a proof-text of Trinitarian doctrine; but whatever implications

## *The Guests of God*

the words may carry with them, it was not of "the inner constitution of the Divine nature" that the Apostle was thinking, but of something much simpler. It is as if he had said, "May you possess the grace of Christ, and the love of God will then be yours, and you will be united with one another through the Spirit."

There are, then, two sides to the Christian fellowship: fellowship with Christ and fellowship with one another.

### I

*He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him*: that is how the Christian society began. Whatever the Church has come to be, and however we may define it, it was at the first simply a fellowship of the friends of Jesus, and the essential thing in the life of the Church is always missing except in so far as that initial experience is repeated in the lives of men to-day. The fellowship is His creation—*He* appointed the twelve—and the burden of its maintenance is upon Him. If, to borrow an illustration of Dr. D. S.

## *The Christian Fellowship*

Cairns, by letter of introduction, or in some other way, I seek to enter the circle of a great man's friendships, that is one thing; but if he himself takes the first step and invites me into it, that is another and a very different thing. And the Christian's fellowship with Christ is begun by His act, and from His side: *Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you.* The words might be read as an implied reproach, as if on our side there were something lacking that might and should have been there. But rightly understood they are the ground of all our hope. If the burden of the fellowship were upon us, if we were responsible for initiating and maintaining it, we know that we could make no headway in it. But since He makes the task His own—and that is the very meaning of the “grace” of which the New Testament is so full—since He chooses and calls and appoints, we may dare to hope that some fruits of the fellowship will be ours.

*He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him:* let us go back to the beginning and see how some of those

## *The Guests of God*

who first entered that fellowship came at last to think of it. Once Jesus said to His disciples, *Let us go into Judæa again.* Rabbi, they answered, *the Jews were but now seeking to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?* But He saw a hand they could not see; nevertheless, He said, *let us go.* Thomas, therefore, said unto his fellow-disciples, *Let us also go, that we may die with Him.* It is easy to see what was in the disciple's mind: if this is the way the Master must go, Thomas will tread it too. To go may mean to die, but at least it will be to die *with Him*; and though Thomas is sure of nothing else, of this he is very sure—that nothing must separate him from his Lord; better death with Him than life without Him. And so the die is cast: *Let us also go.* Then, presently, they came to realise that Christ's fellowship with men is a thing over which even death itself has no power. Jesus, of course, knew it all along. On the Cross He took the nailed hands of the robber into His own: *To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise*; and the fellowship

## *The Christian Fellowship*

begun in the night of Calvary lives on still in heaven's eternal day. When He took last leave of His disciples it was with no sadness of farewell: *Lo, I am with you always*, He said. It is the same great word that was upon His lips at the first: *with Him—with you*. For this fellowship into which He had called them was not tied to the lake-shore, or to the Galilean hills; it belonged not to the passing years, but to the timeless and eternal things. So He thought of it, and so they came to think of it too; as the fellowship had outlived His death, so it would outlive theirs; and when they yielded up to death their dear ones, or thought of their own last hour, this was the faith which lit for them the darkness of the grave: *So shall we be ever with the Lord—with Him* still.

And besides all this the fellowship had fruits which all the world might see and judge of. Whenever Jesus and men came together, things began to happen: old things passed away, wrong things were put right, all things became new. This is how one writes

## *The Guests of God*

of the fellowship who was himself one of the first to enter it : *Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ ;* but, he continues, *if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Nor was this a solitary example ; it was always so that the fellowship worked. Jesus called a publican into it, and straightway the thought of right and wrong, of duty to others, was charged with a new meaning. Henceforth, he said—and said it without any urging from without, as the natural first-fruits of his own new experience—half of his goods he would give to the poor, and where he had wronged any man he would make restitution four-fold. Even the hostile outsider could not wholly shut his eyes to what was happening : *When they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.* Their enemies themselves being witness, the fellowship worked ; and the men whom Christ called to be *with Him* grew in the end to be like Him, and to remind others of Him.



# *The Christian Fellowship*

## II

The Christian fellowship has another side: it includes both our fellowship with Christ and our fellowship with one another. And here, too, the New Testament is equally explicit. *All that believed were together*: this is the note struck at the very beginning of the Apostolic Age; and when we turn to the letters of St. Paul we find them sprinkled throughout with nouns and verbs compounded with the Greek preposition which means "with." Fellow-worker, fellow-prisoner, fellow-servant, fellow-traveller, fellow-heir—these are some of the names, as Dr. Glover says, which Paul uses for his friends. The Christian fellowship is a fellowship of service in which each has his part to fill and his work to do. *I long to see you*, the Apostle writes to the Christians at Rome, *that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift; that is*, he goes on, checking and correcting himself, *that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine*; as

## *The Guests of God*

if he would remind them that the very essence of their relation lies in its mutual character.

Again, the Christian fellowship is a fellowship of suffering. *Endure hardness*, Paul writes to Timothy, *as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*. The word he uses is one of those compound verbs which are not easy to translate. The Authorised Version misses its significance altogether; the Revised reads, *Suffer hardship with me*; but perhaps the true meaning is wider still, as if the Apostle had said, "Life is full of hardship; *take your share*." "No deliberate seeking of a sheltered life," says Dr. Denney, "is truly Christian." For some of us, perhaps, it is a hard saying that may well make us uneasy; yet when we open the New Testament, or sit down at the Holy Table and think of what is meant by the broken bread and the poured-out wine, who dare deny its truth?

And beyond these obvious things there are implications in the Christian fellowship which are only just beginning to dawn upon us. *That ye may be strong to apprehend with all the*

## *The Christian Fellowship*

*saints*—is there not an understanding of the truth of God which is impossible to us in the isolation of our sectarian and national life? As our missionaries have long since told us, there are aspects of our own gospel which we shall never fully understand, until they are expounded to us by the saints of Africa or India or China. “Christians,” says Bunyan, in one of his earlier and less-known books, “are like the several flowers in a garden, that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which, being shaken with the wind, they let fall their dew at each other’s roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of each other.” And there are flowers in the garden of our English Christianity that will never put on their fairest hues until they have been watered and nourished by other hands than our own.

And further yet this fellowship extends. “We also bless Thy holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear”: the words stand as part of the prayer “for the whole state of Christ’s Church

## *The Guests of God*

militant here on earth," in the Communion Service of the Church of England.

One family we dwell in Him,  
One Church, above, beneath.

Into this wide fellowship, a fellowship not of earth only, but of heaven, are we come, *unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* Let us pray to be kept loyal to the generation of God's children.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF  
FELLOWSHIP



## VI. *The Responsibility of Fellowship*

SOMETHING was said in the previous chapter about the Christian fellowship—our fellowship with Christ, and our fellowship with one another. And this fellowship is one of the chief of our Christian privileges. But in God's sight privilege and responsibility are but opposite sides of the same fact, no more to be separated than are the opposite sides of the same coin. In this chapter, therefore, something may be said about the responsibility of fellowship.

### I

It is written of one of the kings of ancient Judah, *Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest*, the implication being, apparently, that it was Jehoiada's influence that kept

## *The Guests of God*

the young king right. Afterwards, when Jehoiada was dead, Joash gave ear to other counsellors, with the result that both he and they *forsook the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols*; but so long as Jehoiada was there all went well—*Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*. And that is the kind of service, the service which Jehoiada did to Joash, that we all owe one to another.

There is nothing in our Christian birthright which is more precious than the moral tradition—the sense that duty is right, that it is the only thing—which the past has created for us. It is a tradition which every man does something to strengthen or to weaken, to energise or to paralyse, and the obligation to see to it that, whether by inspiration or restraint, we make it easier for others to do right and harder to do wrong is one from which none can escape. About the middle of the fifteenth century Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks, who have held it ever since. For long it was the fashion—under Gibbon's



## *The Responsibility of Fellowship*

powerful influence—to sneer at the ancient Christian empire which for a thousand years before that great disaster had its seat in Constantinople. The Byzantine, we were told, was profoundly theological and profoundly vile. But later historians have passed a different judgment, for this if for no other reason, that through those long years the Empire was the solitary breakwater that held back the mounting tide of Asiatic barbarism. When at last it yielded, the young nations of the West had grown strong enough to protect themselves. If it had yielded sooner, all Europe might have been whelmed in night and water. The illustration is a trifle grandiose for the simple thing I am trying to say; but what for a thousand years Constantinople did for Western Europe, what, so long as he lived, Jehoiada did for Joash, is what, according to the measure of our power and opportunity, we have all to do—to build the breakwater behind which, when the storm bursts, another may find shelter. Or, to change the figure for one borrowed from a well-known

## *The Guests of God*

chapter in George Adam Smith's "Isaiah," just as sometimes a huge boulder will arrest the death-dealing drift of the desert sand, and in its shelter verdure and beauty will spring up, so again and again in human life forces deadlier than the desert drift have been stayed by some strong, heroic soul, in whose sheltering shadow other lives have found their chance; a man has been *as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. Such was Jehoiada to Joash, and such God means that we should be to one another.

### II

We ourselves are all debtors to some Jehoiada; we are all better men and women than we should have been but for the silent pressure of unseen hands, the steadying influence of that moral tradition that others have made for us; and what we have received we owe. Does it need to be said that the debt cannot be paid in words? The last man to help us

## *The Responsibility of Fellowship*

here is the religious busybody with his liberal doses of what the schoolboy calls "pi." When Jehoiada "tries it on" after that fashion, nothing happens except that Joash wants to kick him. The one thing here that avails, that has "power on this dead world to make it live," is a religion that cannot be told or taught—it must be caught. We may teach theology, or the Bible, or criticism, but not religion; that is learned, if it is learned at all, when we are teaching something else; and generally, perhaps, it is "caught" most readily from those who least know they are giving it. Nevertheless, the debt remains, not payable in the currency of speech, but there, and to be paid, a due to all men and especially to them *that are of the household of the faith*.

Let us go back to the first Christian fellowship—the origin and pattern of all ours—the fellowship of Jesus and the Twelve. Nothing in the records of our Lord is more instructive than those which show how He wrought on the men who were daily with Him,

## *The Guests of God*

and especially on Peter. On him, more fiercely perhaps than on any of his companions, life's pitiless drift beat down. But between it and him Jesus put Himself—Himself and His prayers, a rock to resist the drift: *I have prayed for thee*, He said, *that thy faith fail not*. And though, as we know, Peter fell, yet—as Dr. Rendel Harris quaintly puts it—"he fell softly, because he fell on that prayer." For what tempted soul is any prayer of ours a sheltering arm? Or do we wince as we read the ancient prophet's word: *God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you?* Not less admonitory is the story of Judas. Need there have been a traitor among the Twelve? We are sure that nothing was wanting on Christ's side; we are sure that He who prayed for Peter prayed also for Judas. But what of the other disciples? Had they done all that they might to save him? When the news was whispered that Judas had made away with himself, did none of them feel that some drop of his blood was upon their heads? It may seem

## *The Responsibility of Fellowship*

fanciful even to ask the question, yet when one reads the story of the filling up of *the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away*, it is not easy to avoid it. Would this have been the end—so Peter may have put it to himself—if only he and James and John and the rest of them had done what they might? And was it that that put the bit into Peter's mouth, and made his words so strangely few and quiet, that, leaving all judgment to Another, he will say of the dead traitor only this—that he had gone *to his own place*? We do not know, but we cannot too often remind ourselves that we are debtors, that the best are responsible for the worst, that we *are* our brother's keeper, and that when one in our home, or our "set," or our church, goes astray, the blame is generally ours as well as his. How often is it that when Joash fails, Jehoiada has failed first!

In these simple moral common-places lies the tragedy of more lives than one cares to think of; yet it is idle to ignore them. God has set us

## *The Guests of God*

in families, in communities, in fellowships of many and varied kinds, and it is through them that many of life's best gifts are made our own; but to receive them while yet we refuse the responsibility that goes along with them is to turn privilege into penalty. Even to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is treason against the fellowship by which we live. And nowhere does such treason wear a baser look than within the fellowship that we call the Christian Church. Yet how inadequately are its responsibilities realised! *The perfecting of the saints, the work of ministering, the building up of the body of Christ*—how little do the things for which these old words stand count in the mind of the average Christian to-day!

How to discharge our debt to the fellowships in which we live is too large a subject for a final paragraph. One thing only need now be said. Every preacher knows how much in a service depends on something that we call "atmosphere." It is difficult to define; but we know when it is there; still more do we know when it



## *The Responsibility of Fellowship*

is not there. With it, anything may happen ; without it, nothing happens. It is like that in the life of the home, the school, the college, the office, the workshop ; always it is “ atmosphere ” that matters most. And “ atmosphere ” is something that every one helps to make or mar.<sup>1</sup> The best safeguard against sickness is what a physician calls “ tone ” ; and “ tone ” has its counterpart in the life of the community. He who cares most for that will best help Joash to do *that which is right in the eyes of the Lord*.

<sup>1</sup> “ There is a sort of moral climate in a household, an impalpable, unseizable, indefinable set of influences, which predispose the inmates to industry and self-control, or else relax fibre and slacken purpose.”

(Morley's *Voltaire*.)





THE AUSTERITY OF THE  
CHRISTIAN LIFE



## VII. *The Austerity of the Christian Life*      ~      ~      ~      ~

ONE of the most arresting words in the New Testament concerning the Lord's Supper is in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.* This is very extraordinary language; what does it mean?

### I

The Apostle was thinking of the idol festivals which took place in Corinth, and of the foul immoralities which were so often associated with them. Apparently there were in the Corinthian Church those who, sheltering themselves behind the Apostle's own conviction that *no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one*, thought that they might still,

## *The Guests of God*

Christians though they were, frequent the old heathen festivals and take no hurt. But the Apostle would not hear of it. When at the Lord's Table, he says, we break the bread and drink the cup, we enter into communion with the Lord of the Table Himself. In like manner, to take part in the sacrifices of paganism is to be joined in the fellowship of demons; and, he adds, with sharp decisiveness, a man may do the one, or he may do the other, but he cannot do both: *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.*

To-day, when the science of Comparative Religion has taught us to look upon the faiths of other peoples with a larger sympathy and charity than once was possible, some will be disposed to resent the uncompromising harshness of the Apostle's language; they will say that it is neither just nor true to speak of the old Greek religion as a religion of devils. It should be remembered, however, that, as Dr. Denney has pointed out, St. Paul is speaking of the ancient pagan-

## *Austerity of the Christian Life*

ism, not as a modern professor of the science of religion, but as a missionary ; not as it might be in theory and ideal, but as it actually was in the life of a gay, luxurious city like Corinth. Judging it from the same standpoint, Mr. Chesterton repeats and endorses the Apostle's verdict. "The Early Church," he says, in his recent book on St. Francis of Assisi, "called the gods of paganism devils, and the Early Church was perfectly right. Whatever natural religion may have had to do with their beginnings, nothing but fiends now inhabited those hollow shrines." And though it is not easy to understand the state of mind of those who will credit what is affirmed by St. Paul and Mr. Chesterton together, but not what is affirmed by St. Paul alone, the words just quoted may teach some to pause before they set aside the Apostle's judgment as too sweeping and severe.

### II

But our immediate concern is with the meaning of St. Paul's word for

## *The Guests of God*

ourselves to-day. It is a reminder, always needed, of the austerity of the Christian life. There are things with which the religion of Jesus resolutely refuses to square, things with which it has no more concord than has the cup of the Lord with the cup of devils; and never is it more fitting that this radical and unalterable incompatibility should be brought home to us than when we kneel at the Lord's Table.

This is not an aspect of the truth of which at the moment we care either to hear or to speak. Puritanism, with its restraints and inhibitions, is at a discount. We prefer to quote Augustine's great saying, *Dilige et quod vis fac*—"Love and do what you like!"—and to emphasise the freedom of the gospel. But though this is a part of the truth, and a very large part, it is not the whole of it. Think what we will of Puritanism, there is a Puritan element in the New Testament and in all true religion which we ignore or try to get rid of only at our peril. Do not let us play off love and law one against another, for

## *Austerity of the Christian Life*

though it is the law of *love* that we are under, it is none the less the *law* of love. The gospel, in St. Paul's thought of it, was not only something to be believed, or received, or welcomed, it was something to be obeyed, and he speaks with great plainness of the consequences of disobedience. In other words, the Christian salvation is a vocation as well as a gift. "No man," says Dr. Carnegie Simpson, "can really open his mind and conscience to the fact of Christ without feeling that he ought to be a better man, and that, if he and Christ are to continue near each other, he must be a better man. His faults are named to him and his duties as never before." Whatever else Christianity means, it indubitably means this, and whenever men are in earnest about it, it is always so that their religion works.

*So did not I*, said Nehemiah, *because of the fear of God*. That is to say, Nehemiah was a religious man, and because he was a religious man there were things which he could not do which others, in the same circum-

## *The Guests of God*

stances, might and would do without hesitation. "You seem a very temperate people here," Mr. Augustine Birrell once said to a Cornish miner, "how did it happen?" The miner replied solemnly, raising his cap, "There came a man amongst us once, and his name was John Wesley." Lord Morley pays a like tribute to Gladstone. After quoting from one of his great speeches in the House of Commons, in which he set forth his view of the temper and principles on which nations to-day should deal with one another, Morley adds this pregnant comment: "Mr. Gladstone was not a Christian for nothing." To him, as to Nehemiah, religion did really mean something; he, too, might have said, "So did I—so did not I—because of the fear of God." It is always so, I repeat, that real religion works, and the Christian who interprets his freedom as a freedom to go anywhere and to do anything that "nature" prompts will quickly find St. Paul across his path with the blunt word of denial upon his lips: *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils.*



## *Austerity of the Christian Life*

### III

“St. Paul—yes,” some one may say, “but not Jesus. These harsh and unlovely austerities that would hedge in as with thorns our way through the garden of life—they do not grow in the sunnier, milder air of the Gospels.” But is this really so? Our modern quest of the historical Jesus has, it is true, shown us as never before the gaiety, the geniality, the winsomeness of the Man of Nazareth; and it is well that we should be shown these things, for they are there, but there are other things besides these. “Jesus, Thy deeds were gentle, yet who hath spoken words so austere as Thine? Thou hast told us of utter separation, Thou hast shown us a place where the tear falls in vain.” Usually when Christians speak of the Cross, it is of His that they are thinking; when He spoke of it, it was our cross, the cross that we must take up, that He meant. And has any one proclaimed with such solemn insistence as He did the need of the

## *The Guests of God*

sternest self-mastery, no matter what the price may be? *If thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire.* That is not a word for every man; it is for him who needs it. It is not a plea for asceticism for its own sake, and as an end in itself. If it urges self-mutilation, it is only for the sake of self-preservation. "*If thy hand causeth thee to stumble*"—all hinges on that; and of that each must judge for himself, and none for his neighbour. As Dr. Maclaren puts it, every man must be his own doctor, and keep his own finger on his pulse, and watch the first sign of failure there. But when the need is manifest, then Christ's word becomes as imperative, as urgent, as the angel's summons to Lot: *Escape for thy life; look not*

## *Austerity of the Christian Life*

*behind thee, neither stay thou in all the Plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.* There may seem something unworthy, unheroic, in this hasty flight ; were it not better, we may ask, to stay and fight it out ? Yet there are occasions—again, each must judge of them for himself—when to flee is the one safe and wise and right thing to do, when to dodge temptation is better even than to fight it. There are places we may not visit, there are books we may not read, there are pictures we may not look at, there are thoughts we may not think. That others can do these things is nothing. If for us they are fuel to the flame of our lusts ; if they mean something for which even Paul's strong word is not too strong—that we should have *communion with devils*, then there is only one thing for it : *Watch, pray that ye enter not into temptation.* So, in our austerity, we may win our souls.



ATARAXIA



## VIII. *Ataraxia*

ATARAXIA is the title of a chapter in one of Dr. Rendel Harris's delightful books of devotion. The Greek word used in the Fourth Gospel—*Let not your heart be troubled*—is, he says, a verb *tarasso* (disturb), “from which we can at once form a noun, which shall express the state of disturbance (*taraxia*), and then, by prefixing the negative, we make the word *Ataraxia*, which expresses the undisturbed state.” *Ataraxia*, then, is the name for that peaceful temper, that quietness of spirit, of which the farewell words of Jesus were so full. As Dr. Harris suggests, the word is much more musical than its long and clumsy English equivalent, “undisturbedness,” and though at first it may sound a little foreign, he thinks we shall soon be at home with it and like to use it.

# *The Guests of God*

## I

First let us seek a fuller definition of *Ataraxia*. It is the more necessary to define it in that it is so readily counterfeited. It is not fatalism. Fatalism is resignation to fate, and fate, as Sir George Adam Smith says, is simply omnipotence without character. Fatalism, therefore, is "the characterless condition to which belief in such a God reduces man." That, certainly, is not the peace of which Jesus speaks. Nor is it mere imperturbability, the stolid, bovine placidity, which is too dull of heart or too thick of skin to feel what others feel. "Two painters painted a picture to illustrate his conception of rest. The first chose for his scene a still, lone lake among the far-off mountains. The second threw on his canvas a thundering waterfall, with a fragile birch-tree bending over the foam ; at the fork of a branch, almost wet with the cataract's spray, a robin sat on its nest." This surely is the rest which Jesus desired for His



## *Ataraxia*

disciples—the rest not of death but of life, the peace not of exhaustion but of strength. And as *Ataraxia* is not the temper that cannot feel, so neither is it the stoicism that will not.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Henley's little poem is now almost the Confession of Faith of the modern stoic ; and, doubtless, an iron mood like that may bring a man peace of a sort ; but, again, that is not the peace that Jesus promised.

The *Ataraxia* of Jesus is perhaps best understood through concrete illustrations of it. We open that great book of the heart, the Hebrew Psalter, and we read :

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,  
For he shall never be moved ;  
He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ;  
His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

There is the record of some unknown soul's experience with God. Behind that verse stands a man like ourselves, whom evil tidings could not make

## *The Guests of God*

afraid, who through his trust had found deliverance from his fears. It is a voice out of the dim past to tell us that *Ataraxia*, the peace of God, lies within the reach of harassed men and women like ourselves to-day. And how many of them have learned the holy secret modern Christian biography will tell. Here, for example, is the last entry in Bishop Hanning-ton's pocket diary, written just before he was led out to death: "I can hear no news, but was held up by Psalm xxx which came with great power. A hyena howled near me last night, smelling a sick man, but I hope it is not to have me yet." That is not fatalism; it is not stoicism; it is *Ataraxia*—the quiet of a mind that is stayed on God. Of all the disciples of Jesus none, perhaps, have better understood His words in the Upper Room than the Quakers, and it is fitting that one of their number should have given us the name for the temper we are describing. To how many of us have their very faces spoken of that large upper chamber, whose windows open to the sunrising, and

## Ataraxia

whose name is Peace ! But our best commentary on the word of Jesus is Jesus Himself. He is the great example of undisturbedness. *Peace I leave with you ; My peace I give unto you. My peace*—and yet even as He spoke He could hear the bloodhounds on His track. Down in the dark street wicked men, with one of His own disciples among them, were plotting to take away His life ; and yet He said, *My peace*. Gethsemane, Calvary, the grave lay immediately in front of Him ; they were the next steps in the way ; and He knew it ; and yet still He said, *My peace*. And His will is that the peace that was His should be ours.

Dr. Harris tells us of one whom he knew who carried on an active service for his Master in the busiest of all cities, and who chose for his telegraphic address the words, “Undisturbed, London.” The phrase may remind us of what we are all so slow to believe, that the *Ataraxia* of Jesus is meant for men, and not merely for monks, for the home and the busy world, and not merely for the cloister.

## *The Guests of God*

It is no delicate plant which will bloom only in the sheltered nooks of our rough world ; it grows beside the dusty highway, and where it is blown upon by all the winds of heaven. Christ does not withdraw His servants from the world in order that they may abide in peace. Like Wordsworth's water-lily, "whose head floats on the tossing waves," and yet "lives and thrives" because its root "is fixed in stable earth," so He would have men, there where their work is, abide in peace because they abide in Him.

### II

Of the blessedness of this temper there is little need to speak. Wherever we see it, in the lives of others, or imaged in the peace of nature, it makes its appeal to us, and we wish it ours.

Calm soul of all things ! make it mine  
To feel, amid the city's jar,  
That there abides a peace of thine  
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

*Ataraxia*, too, is not without a certain practical value which even "the

## Ataraxia

world's coarse thumb and finger" know how to measure. Fret and fuss, like friction in machinery, mean wasted power, energy working to no end. It is the still, strong man, the man of faith, who comes to the top in a crisis, when they who are all fuss and fluster can do nothing but get in the way. When the tempest struck the ship which bore St. Paul to Rome, the most "practical" man on board was the man who talked with the angels and made his home in the Unseen.

*Let not your heart be troubled:* but in a world like ours is such a peace within man's reach? Two things must be remembered. (1) The word is Christ's word. There are some who when they cry, *Fear not*, only move us to anger: thin, shallow souls, without eyes to see or hearts to feel, what should they know of the fears that rack and rend the soul? But Christ knew all; He drank of sorrow out of a full cup; His clear eyes read, His tender heart endured, the worst that life can do; yet still He said that men need not fear. Had He

## *The Guests of God*

not the right to speak, and shall we not believe Him ?

(2) *Let not your heart be troubled—believe in God—believe in Me*: the three words must be held fast together. It is useless to say, *Let not your heart be troubled*, it is useless even for Christ to say it, if there is no more to be said. With death looking in at all our windows and breaking in at all our doors, how can we not be troubled ? We must *believe in God*. Yet there are times when even that is not enough. Believe in God ?—if we could, then indeed our fears would be quieted and all would be well. But it is just there that faith sometimes finds its hardest task : who, where, is He that we may believe in Him ?

On the road Thy wheels are not,  
Nor on the sea Thy sail.

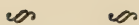
One word remains : *believe in Me*. Faith's last refuge is Jesus—last, but sure. The weakest believer can hang upon Him. "Other refuge have I none" ; and none other do we need ; "Thou, O Christ, art all I want."

DOES GOD CARE?





## *IX. Does God Care?*



“ I HAVE always thought,” says Bishop Gore in the preface to his recent book, “Belief in God,” “that the only very difficult dogma of the Church was the dogma that God is Love.” And in the pages which follow he refers more than once to the profound difficulties, so widely and so acutely felt to-day, in the way of receiving the comforting doctrine of the goodness of God.

### I

It is true that something may be done in seeking to meet these difficulties even without the aid of the Christian revelation. As Dr. Gore says, reason in us demands goodness in God. Perhaps the truth cannot be better put than in Dolly Winthrop’s simple creed: “It allays comes into my head when I’m sorry for folks,

## *The Guests of God*

and feel as I can't do a power to help 'em, not if I was to get up i' the middle o' the night—it comes into my head as Them above has got a deal tenderer heart nor what I've got—for I can't be anyways better nor Them as made me." And the saying, simple and unconventional as it is, goes to the root of the matter. When we argue from that which is highest and best in ourselves to God, our argument may be very incomplete, but it is valid as far as it goes. The Maker may infinitely transcend His work ; He cannot fall behind it.

He that planted the ear, shall He not hear ?  
He that formed the eye, shall He not see ?

And He that made the heart, shall He not love ? We remember Browning's great argument :

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's  
ultimate gift,  
That I doubt His own love can compete with  
it ? Here, the parts shift ?  
Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the  
end, what Began ?  
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all  
for this man,

## *Does God Care?*

And dare doubt He alone shall not help him,  
who yet alone can ?

Would I suffer for him that I love ?

So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou.

And this, too, is the logic of Jesus :  
*If ye, being evil, know how to give good  
gifts unto your children, how much  
more shall your Father which is in  
heaven give good things to them that  
ask Him.* It is a deep, true instinct  
of the human heart that speaks here,  
and we may trust it. The something  
within that bids us believe in One  
above who is wiser and better than  
ourselves is a part of that witness to  
Himself which God has planted in  
the soul of man.

## II

And yet it may well be doubted if  
this faith unaided can keep its feet  
in face of the cruel facts of life. Look,  
for example, at the sufferings of the  
animal world. Many of us perhaps  
hardly think of them at all. Of those  
who do, some lose their heads and grow  
hysterical. But Dean Church—a man

## *The Guests of God*

as free from hysteria and as little likely to lose his head as any man—used to say that the condition of the lower animals gave him vertigo whenever he thought of it. And Dr. Gore agrees with him. “I confess,” he writes, “that the glint of pain in an animal’s eye remains, if not a valid argument against belief in God’s goodness, yet, as often as my mind dwells on it, a source of unrelieved discomfort.” And when we turn to human life the problem deepens. Still from a thousand Calvarys the old cry goes up to the silent, unresponding heavens: *My God, my God, why——?* Why do little children suffer? Why is innocence made to bear the burden of the guilty? Why is all our life so dark with griefs and graves?

There are, of course, many ways in which we may seek to blunt the sharp edge of the problem. We may remind ourselves of what the world might have been if sin had not entered in to mar the Divine purpose concerning it; we may call to mind how much of what is best in life we owe to the shaping hands of pain and sorrow; we

## *Does God Care?*

may bring in another world to redress the balance of this, and say that the Divine love has eternity to work in ; above all, perhaps, we may take to heart Butler's great and always needed reminder of our ignorance and of our unfitness to be the judge of the ways of God. Nevertheless, if this is all there is to be said, if faith has no other allies than these, it is hard to see how it can survive : the facts of life will thrust it down and trample it to death beneath their ruthless feet. Professor Huxley would have granted the force of some at least of the considerations just named ; but every one knows where they left him. Indeed no man, perhaps, has ever faced more unflinchingly the remorseless logic of his own position : " I cannot see," he told Kingsley, " one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts."

## *The Guests of God*

### III

Huxley could not see one shadow or tittle of evidence that God loves us and cares for us. Of course he could not; nor could we if we only looked where he looked. If we were shut up to Huxley's facts we should be shut up to Huxley's conclusions. Is it not time to drop our easy-going optimism that lightly takes for granted the love of God, as if it were the most obvious thing in the universe? The truth is that the doctrine of the Divine love needs nothing less than the whole strength of the Church's faith in Christ to sustain it. Dr. Gore does indeed report that the estimate of nature as "a gladiator's show," which was fashionable in Huxley's day, has been greatly modified by more recent science; that there is something more in the picture than the struggle for existence. Nevertheless, enough still remains to challenge seriously our Christian faith. It must always be hard to discover absolute love in a world in which, as

## *Does God Care?*

one writer grimly puts it, "everything is eternally eating everything else."  
"O wide-embracing, wondrous Love,"  
Horatius Bonar taught us to sing,

We read Thee in the sky above ;  
We read Thee in the earth below,  
In seas that swell and streams that flow.

But we may well doubt if any man ever read the love of God there who had not first read it in the face of Jesus Christ.

When we turn to the New Testament we see at once what gave to its writers their assurance of the Divine love: it was what they had seen of God in Jesus. St. Peter speaks of those *who through Him are believers in God*. And for the Christian believer there is no other way. Belief in a god of some sort or other we may have apart from Christ; but for the Christian belief Christ is the only foundation. It was certainly so, and only so, that St. Paul reached his doctrine of the love of God. It was not the brilliant guess of a great religious genius; it did not come to him by way of intuition; it was—we



## *The Guests of God*

must put it simply if we are to put it truly—God's word about Himself, spoken by Himself, in Jesus Christ. It is surely significant that in the great passage in the eighth of Romans on the Divine love—a passage that thrills and awes us by its holy vehemence—the Apostle never speaks of “the love of God” simply: it is first *the love of Christ*, and then more fully *the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. And the reason is plain—apart from Christ there is no sure knowledge of the love of God. It is because God so loved that He *gave*, because He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, because in the life and death of Jesus men have seen the infinite self-sacrifice of God Himself; therefore they have dared to believe in spite of all that God is love and love creation's final law. They have seen that love in Jesus, and that has made them sure.

Is it not well that we should remember these things to-day? In the stress that has come upon us through the application to our Gospels of modern methods of historical inquiry



## Does God Care?

some are being tempted to say, "Oh well, if the history must go, let it go. Why worry any more about miracles? After all, the great Christian ideas remain, and it is by these that men live." Yes, but it was not merely the ideas of Jesus that made men sure of God: it was Jesus Himself. St. Paul believed in the love of God, not so much because Jesus talked about it or because He said, *When ye pray, say Father*, but because in Him he saw the Divine love in being, in Him was made manifest the love of God. It is in the Jesus of history, in Him of whom the Gospels tell us, who did many marvellous works, who died for our sins, who rose again from the dead, it is in Him that men have seen the Father; and it is worse than idle to tell us that we may let all this go, or hold it only with a slack hand, and still go on believing, as if nothing had happened, in the love and fatherhood of God. I repeat, the only love of God of which we can be sure is *the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Let that go, and the very grave is at our feet.



## THE BESETTING GOD



## *X. The Besetting God*

THE one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm is a psalm about God. Who wrote it no man knows, and it does not in the least matter. Its meaning and spiritual worth are wholly independent of its authorship. The important thing for us is, this is how some unknown saint of old did come to think of God; this is what God was to him. And the majesty of his thought wedded to majestic speech—"like perfect music unto noble words"—has set this psalm on high, even among "the Praises of Israel."

### I

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me.  
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine  
    uprising,  
Thou understandest my thought afar off.  
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,  
And art acquainted with all my ways.  
For there is not a word in my tongue,  
But, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.

## *The Guests of God*

Thou hast beset me behind and before,  
And laid Thine hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ;  
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.—(Vv. 1-6.)

It is usual, I believe, to say that the theme of these great verses is the Divine Omniscience. "Nowhere," writes Perowne, "are the great attributes of God—His Omniscience, His Omnipotence, Omnipresence—set forth so strikingly as they are in this magnificent Psalm." This is true; but it is, perhaps, the least part of the truth. "Omniscience" and the other big words are much used in catechisms and the definitions of theology, but they say very little to the average man. The psalmist was not a philosopher, and in this psalm he is dealing, not with philosophical abstractions, but with personal experience; he is not shaping a definition of God, he is telling what God is to himself; what he gives us is not theology but religion. To put it in a single word, the sum of these verses is not so much, "God knows all things"; it is rather, "God knows *me*." All our life, our down-

## *The Besetting God*

sitting and our uprising, our rest and our activities ; all our speech ; even the thoughts of our heart—all are known and understood, *naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do* ; this is the truth before which the psalmist bows down hushed and awed. Yet he does not shrink from it ; rather he welcomes it. The text, *Thou God seest me*, which has so often been used to terrorise little children—as if God were a kind of super-detective!—has no terrors for him. He would not have it otherwise ; he is glad to think that there is One in whose perfect knowledge he can take refuge :

How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!  
When I awake, I am still with Thee ;

and the psalm closes with a prayer that the Divine Searcher will go on with His work till all evil has been discovered and judged and cast out.

### II

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit ?  
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ?  
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there :

### III

## *The Guests of God*

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,  
And Thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall screen me,  
And the light about shall be night,"

Even the darkness hideth not from Thee,

But the night shineth as the day :

The darkness and the light are both alike to  
Thee.—(Vv. 7-12.)

The unescapable God ! We often speak of our besetting sins ; this man remembers his besetting God. The word which he uses is used of a besieging army ; so, like a beleaguered city, the psalmist sees himself hemmed in on every side, and his besieger is God. And once more, be it noted, it is this thought that is the spring of all the psalmist's joy. What the all-encompassing Presence was to Brother Lawrence, and to General Gordon within the walls of Khartoum—"my Koh-i-noor"—so is it to him. *Whither shall I flee from Thy presence ?* Go where he may he cannot ; there is no getting away from God. And that is the psalmist's hope. Sin, it is



## *The Besetting God*

true, has always to be reckoned with ; but it is never a man's whole environment ; God, too, is in it. There is a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. "Of that great change," R. L. Stevenson once wrote about some crisis in his life, "which turned me from one whose business was to shirk into one whose business was to strive and persevere—it seems as though all that had been done by some one else. I was never conscious of a struggle, nor registered a vow, nor seemingly had anything personal to do with the matter. I came about like a well-handled ship. There stood at the wheel that unknown steersman whom we call God."

And thus, through all the changes and chances of our mortal life, we are beset by God. In the night of fear *there shall Thy hand lead me* ; and in the deeper night that men call death, *behold, Thou art there also*. Listen to this quiet word of faith from one who was "to the margin come" : "I lie like a boat upon a quiet tide, drifting out to sea—the sea to which we must all drift. . . . I have lived my little

## *The Guests of God*

life, and my heart goes out to all of every tribe and nation under the sun who are still in the body. I would tell them with my last breath that there is comfort to the end—that there is nothing worth fretting over or being heavy-hearted about; that the Father's arm is strong, and that His heart is very wide."

### III

The verses which follow (13-18) it is not necessary either to quote or to linger upon. The psalmist is still dwelling on the wonder of the Divine wisdom and power. Even before he was born the Divine hand was upon him; before he began to be all his days were ordered and ordained of God. Then, again, he passes into thanksgiving:

I will give thanks unto Thee; for I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made:  
Wonderful are Thy works;  
And that my soul knoweth right well.

Then come other verses which seem at first to mark a swift and strange descent:

## *The Besetting God*

Oh that Thou wouldest slay the wicked, O God :  
Depart from me therefore, ye blood-thirsty  
men.

For they speak against Thee wickedly,  
And Thine enemies take Thy name in vain.  
Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee ?  
And do not I loathe those that rise up against  
Thee ?

I hate them with perfect hatred :  
I count them mine enemies.—(Vv. 19-22.)

This is a harsh note that jars all our nerves—a discord in the else perfect music of the psalm. What is the meaning of the strange outburst ? It is not really an intrusion, much as we may wish it were not here. The psalmist has been meditating upon God and the glory of the Divine Being. Then he turns his eyes to earth, and what does he see ? Evil men, men of blood, men who hate God, who defy Him, and lift themselves up against Him. Mark, they are not his enemies, they are God's ; or, if they are his, they are his only because they are God's ; it is against Him they are risen up. With such men what terms can God make ? He can make none ; He can but smite till they be utterly destroyed. And it is the energy of

## *The Guests of God*

this conviction that finds expression in the psalmist's words. Of course they are not Christian words, and no Christian to-day would desire to make them his own. But they are not sheer, unmitigated savagery. Beneath their fierceness there lives a truth which man forgets at his peril. Our God is no mere passive spectator of human life, and when men set themselves to work all manner of unrighteousness, it is with Him, the Judge of all the earth, they have to make their reckoning.

Nevertheless, we are thankful the psalm does not end on a note like that. These are the closing verses :

Search me, O God, and know my heart :  
Try me, and know my thoughts :  
And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.

(Vv. 23, 24.)

And so the end of the psalm bends back to meet the beginning. Its opening word is, *O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me*; its closing prayer, *Search me, O God, and know my heart*. The psalmist had

## *The Besetting God*

cast his eyes over the world ; he had seen its wild and lawless men, and their wild and lawless ways, and he had rejoiced to know that God's judgments are abroad ; now he turns within, to his own heart, his own thoughts, his own sin, and he prays that the same God will search and try and judge *him*. How better can we close our re-reading of the psalm than by making the prayer our own ?



**"THINGS PRESENT"**





## XI. " Things Present "      ~      ~

*THE love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*—it is with this simple and memorable phrase that St. Paul ends one of the most wonderful passages in all his Epistles. And in the verses which immediately precede it he recounts a list of foes not one of which, he says, shall be able to separate us from that love: *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature.* One phrase in the list always catches and holds me whenever I read or hear it—*things present.*

### I

*Things present*—what exactly did Paul mean by the words? It is probably vain to ask the question concerning either this or any other of the

## *The Guests of God*

things which he names. All attempts to give them definiteness, as Dr. Denney says, are "remote from the seriousness and passion of the Apostle's mind." If he himself had been challenged on the matter he would probably have declined to answer. In the earlier chapters of the Epistle he has been arguing; now he has left argument far behind; prose has passed into poetry, logic into song, song like the lark's when it fills all heaven with its music. Winged words like these are not to be caught and prisoned within the narrow walls of the dictionary's definitions. They are the lyric cry of a heart struggling to find speech in which to tell out its assurance that nothing that God has made, whatever be its nature, shall be able to separate it from the Divine love which is manifest in Christ. And like all great poetry they have meanings wider than any that were consciously present to the singer's own mind. There is no need, therefore, to apologise for the use which I make of one of the Apostle's phrases now.

## “ *Things Present* ”

### II

*Things present*, the things that are about us, that hourly occupy eye and ear and hand and mind, “the daily round, the common task”—is there not sometimes real peril lest these things *separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*? How they lord it over us, brooking no rivals, claiming all life for themselves, and that not because they are the only or the all-important things, but just because they are there and always there! “Lament thou and grieve,” writes Thomas à Kempis, “that thou art yet so carnal and worldly, so watchful over thy outward senses, so often entangled with many vain fancies, so much inclined to outward things, so negligent to things inward and spiritual; so quickly distracted, so seldom wholly gathered into thyself.” It is the good man’s way of warning us against the tyranny of the immediate, against letting things, as we say, “get on top of us,” against suffering *things present* to rule over us.

## *The Guests of God*

In Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's volume on Lord Shaftesbury there is an extract from his private diary which may well make busy men and women pause: "Am getting on in life," he wrote, "and must use, while it lasts, my remnant of intellect; powers, such as they were, weaken; and no wonder, for it is all expense and no income; all labour and no rest; all action and no study; all exhaustion and no supply. Not had time to read a single book, a single review." I do not quote this in order to "lecture" either Lord Shaftesbury or any one else; but is it not plain where such a path, if pursued, must lead? When exports have got so far ahead of imports, when life has become "all expense and no income," what can the end be but bankruptcy? And that is the standing peril of the preacher, the tragedy of more lives and the secret of more barren ministries than one cares to think of. We preachers often warn men and women in our congregations against a too great absorption in what we call the "world." But have we not

## “ *Things Present* ”

our “ world ” too—the world of books, and calls, and committees, and engagements—and may not this come between us and God just as surely as the business man’s world ?

### III

I have referred in an earlier chapter to the privilege which has been mine of going through the private papers and letters of one of the busiest and most successful Christian workers of his generation. If any minister of the Church during recent years might have been thought to be in danger from *things present* it was Collier, of Manchester. But Collier knew his peril, and therein lay his safeguard. He was walking home one day with a younger preacher whose popular gifts were beginning to attract large crowds: “ I say, ——,” he said, “ have you ever thought of that text [he was quoting from memory], *Great multitudes came together to hear. But He withdrew Himself in the deserts, and prayed* ” ? It was a word of counsel to his companion ; but it was

## *The Guests of God*

still more a word about himself and his own conscious need. The truth is, and little as those who only saw him at a distance ever guessed, Collier was something of a mystic; a "practical mystic," indeed—to borrow Lord Rosebery's happy phrase about Oliver Cromwell—but still a mystic. What Lord Morley said of Gladstone, that he "lived from a great depth of being," was true also in its way of Collier. All his springs were in God. The full rushing stream of his daily activities was fed from the eternal hills.

Evermore

Prayer from a living source within the will,  
And beating up through all the bitter world,  
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,  
Kept him a living soul.

The greatest hour in the day, some of his old fellow-workers have told me, was when he met them for prayer, morning by morning, at the Central Hall in Manchester.

From the world of sin, and noise,  
And hurry, I withdraw.

*Withdraw*—that for us is the difficult

## “ *Things Present* ”

but necessary thing ; it is so easy to be busy, so hard to be “ wholly gathered ” into one’s self. Nevertheless, we must do it ; for our work’s sake, for our own soul’s sake, for every kind of sake, we must do it. We must learn to shut to the door, to be “ alone with the Alone,” to push back the throng and press of things, to make a space about the soul wherein it may have room to think and pray and grow, that *things present* separate us not from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.





# BURDEN OR BRIDGE?



## XII. *Burden or Bridge?*

WHEN George Eliot's "Life" was published, and the world learned with what apparent suddenness and ease she had cast off her early religious faith, Hutton of the *Spectator* shrewdly observed: "To me the remarkable point is that George Eliot felt herself relieved of a burden rather than robbed of a great spiritual mainstay by the change." And there are many to-day who, though they have no thought of doing as George Eliot did, yet interpret religion as a restraint rather than an inspiration, a burden rather than a bridge, something that they are carrying rather than something that can carry them. To Bunyan, coming to Christ meant, first of all, deliverance from a burden that had grown to be intolerable; but to them religion is only a new set of responsibilities, more things to be done, one item more in the heavy pack which life, the

## *The Guests of God*

great task-master, lays upon tired shoulders. But, obviously, if that is so, there must be something wrong in our thinking. Let us go back and learn, if we can, where we have taken the wrong turn.

### I

There are some who make a burden out of the beliefs of the Church. Religion presents itself to them as a number of things to be believed—things about God, the Bible, the future, and so on. The creed is thought of as something imposed by the heavy hand of ecclesiastical authority, which the disciple, whether he will or no, must shoulder and carry. And impatient youth, confronted, as it supposes, with a demand like that, jibs and wants to know why it should be expected to take upon its back this huge kit of doctrines. Who is responsible for the misunderstanding—youth, or its teachers—we need not pause to inquire; but that it is a misunderstanding a little clear thinking will quickly show.

## *Burden or Bridge?*

Go back to the time when Christianity was a new thing in the world. What had the disciples who first believed in Jesus to do with the creeds? Obviously nothing, for as yet there were none. The first Christians were confronted, not with doctrines about Jesus, but with Jesus Himself. The creeds came later, as they were bound to come, because man is a reasoning being who must try to account to himself for what he holds to be true. But what were they when they came? They were not, and they were never meant to be, final statements of truth imposed by authority upon others; they simply set forth, in the best terms that were then available, what those who framed them had found in Christ. What, then, should be our attitude to them? The attitude of those who are at once debtors and free. We are debtors, and if we are wise we shall thankfully acknowledge our debt; we shall use the creeds to help us to see and find in Christ what men before us have seen and found in Him. But we are still free, as free as were the first disciples, to see Jesus

## *The Guests of God*

for ourselves, and to say in our own way what we have seen in Him. In the long run even the most ancient and venerable of the creeds have value for us only just in so far as we are able to re-discover in our own experience the truth of which they are the imperfect expression. Christ imposes no burdens of belief. The creed that is not the language of a living faith is only so much dead lumber, and it is mere childishness to imagine that we make ourselves pleasing to Him by carrying it about on our backs like the idols of Babylon which the prophet saw—"mere baggage-bales" on the backs of weary beasts. But if our creed is simply experience translated into speech, an attempt to find words for the biggest and the best thing that we know, all talk of a "burden" is beside the mark; it is the soul's free, glad confession of faith, its adoring cry as it clasps the feet of Him in whom it has found its Lord and its God.

There is a well-known and beautiful legend which tells how our great Christian chant, the "Te Deum,"

## *Burden or Bridge?*

sprang by sudden inspiration to the lips of Ambrose and Augustine, at the baptism of the latter, in the Church of St. John at Milan. Ambrose began, "We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord"; and Augustine replied, "All the earth doth worship Thee; the Father everlasting," and so on, antiphonally, to the end. It is only legend, of course, but it may serve to remind us of what we are so prone to forget, that what gives worth to a creed is not the logical definitions of the shaping intellect, but the spiritual experience which, as best it can, it is striving to express. A saying of Dr. Denney goes to the root of the whole matter: "The Church's confession of faith should be sung, not signed." Once more, therefore, let it be said that what Christianity sets before us is not first a creed, fashioned by another's hands and imposed by another's will, something that we must carry; rather is it "a living and a lifting God." First let us seek experience of Him in Christ; after that, so much of a creed as we need will follow, and it will be

## *The Guests of God*

no burden on the back, but a song of redemption on the lips of the redeemed.

### II

The burden of belief is not the only burden which men are bearing in the name of religion. If to some it is a creed, to others it is a code ; to them it speaks not so much of things to be believed as of things to be done ; and the doing is of various kinds, both ritual and moral. *Blessed*, cries one of the psalmists, *blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden*. But as one glances down the long line of religious history from the days of Jesus until now, how many there are who seem never even to have tasted that joy ! They are like a string of Swiss pack-horses, as one has seen them toiling and straining up some steep Alpine pass, under a blazing summer sun, and the tragedy of it is that their burdens are the burdens of their religion. Think of the Pharisees of Christ's day, binding burdens heavy and grievous to be borne on men's



## *Burden or Bridge?*

hearts and consciences, a load that grew past all endurance, and doing it all in the name of religion. Think of the long and evil centuries through which the Roman Catholic ideal of saintliness was supreme; think of the figures that look down upon us from the walls of every picture-gallery in Europe, "the thin, pale face, the eyes red with tears or weary with watching, the transparent hands, the wasted form"; and then ask where are the joyous freedom and triumph which meet us on every page in the New Testament, and in which Jesus meant that all His disciples should share? And even within Protestantism, and among ourselves, the old tradition still lives on. John Brown, of Had-dington, has told us that in his youth before he had learned a more excellent way, he would make a vow to pray on some days three times, on others six times, and how when conscience upbraided him with neglect he would double or even triple the ordinary tale, in order to pay off his old debts—making his religion, as men have so often done, not a bridge but a burden.

## *The Guests of God*

“And, surely,” it may be urged, “religion does lay its burdens upon us. Did not Jesus Himself, in the same breath in which He promised men rest, speak of His yoke and burden? Is not the symbol of His religion a cross which we must bear as well as He?” This is true; but it is no contradiction of what is now being said. In religion, as in so many things, all depends at what end we begin, what things we put first. Interpret Christ’s religion in terms of religious observances, or as a new punctiliousness about duty, and we make of it a merely magnified decalogue, a refined and elaborated Judaism—the very thing that drove men like Paul and Martin Luther well-nigh to despair. It is not there that Christ would have us begin. Those who would be His disciples He confronts neither with a creed to be believed nor with a code to be obeyed, but with Himself: *Come ye after Me*; and love to Him ensures, as no commandments can do, creed and code alike. The question, therefore, we have all to ask (as George Adam

## *Burden or Bridge?*

Smith puts it in a memorable chapter of exposition) is not, "Can I carry this faith? but, Can this faith carry me? Not, Can I afford to take up such and such opinions? but, Can I afford to travel at all without such a God? It is not a creed, but a living and a lifting God, who awaits our decision."



LIVING BY THE FAITH OF  
OTHERS



### *XIII. Living by the Faith of Others*

PREACHERS are wont to insist on the importance of having a religion of one's own. True religion, say they, can never be mere hearsay; it is a personal discovery, a first-hand experience, not something borrowed or inherited, but our own—won, if need be, with our own heart's blood. Like the Samaritans, we too must be able to say, *Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know.* And, of course, all this is very true and very important; but it is not the whole truth. Religion, it is said, must be our own, born of our own vision of God, the expression of our own consciousness of the goodness and mercy of God. But suppose the vision lost, and the consciousness numbed and paralysed by the hard and cruel facts of life; suppose there be no inward assurance of God, then

## *The Guests of God*

what can we do ? We can do this : when we have no faith of our own by which we can live, we can live by the faith of others. If we cannot and dare not say, *my Lord, and my God*, at least we may say, *the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers.*

Trouble is near :  
For there is none to help.  
Why art Thou so far from helping me ?  
O my God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou  
    answerest not ;  
And in the night season, but find no rest.

It may have come even to that with us, but if, like the same psalmist, we can say :

Our fathers trusted in Thee :  
They trusted, and Thou didst deliver them.  
They cried unto Thee, and were delivered,

then is our deliverance nearer than we think. The faith of others cannot, indeed, be any permanent substitute for our own, but if in doubt's desperate hour we can hold on to it, like a broken spar from a shipwrecked vessel, it may keep us afloat till rescue come through the recovery of our own faith.



## *Living by the Faith of Others*

Let us try to understand how this may be.

### I

And, first, it should be remembered that when we are asked in the venture of faith to commit ourselves to God, it is no untried experiment to which we are invited. We are not the first to believe in God: "We come unto our fathers' God." Religion has a past, and a very long past; its records are in many lands and in many languages; and sometimes in the sure certainties of yesterday we may find some solid ground amid the dubieties and questionings of to-day.

This is the argument of the great eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer is seeking to hearten men who were bowed down under many and sore trials, and he does it by unfolding before their eyes their nation's roll of honour, the names of their holy dead who had endured as seeing Him who is invisible. *Therefore, he says, let us, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, run with patience the race*

## *The Guests of God*

*that is set before us.* In other words, he would have the wavering faith of the living strengthen itself in the faith of the dead. And for us to-day the exhortation has gained in force a hundredfold. The faith of the first believers was faith in an untried Christ. No long and sacred history gave its sanction to their individual venture, and when the fires of their faith burned low there were no stored-up memories with which to replenish them. They could live only by their own faith. And the same is true to-day of Christian converts on the mission field. There is no appeal for them to the God of their fathers. Like soldiers who with no "supports" have pushed forward into the enemies' lines and have only their own quick brains and strong right arms to trust to, so the young convert in India or China has only his own faith to fall back upon, with little aid from that of others. But we have meat to eat that they know not of ; we are upheld by unseen hands ; angels of memory minister unto us. For behind us lie nearly two thousand years of Christian

## *Living by the Faith of Others*

history and experience. We can say, with a fulness of meaning that the psalmist never knew, *O God, our fathers have told us what work Thou didst in their days, in the days of old :*

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

### II

Do we make as much of these things as we might ? In the emphasis which with good reason Protestantism has laid on the individual, we sometimes forget that religion has a corporate as well as an individual life. It is not simply a matter between the lonely soul and God—God's mercy to *me* ; the Christian has his place in a great society which reaches in one unbroken line through sixty generations :

One family we dwell in Him,  
One Church, above, beneath.

And in certain narrow and limited ways we all remember these things and profit by them. A son recalls his saintly mother—the Bible in which

## *The Guests of God*

she read, the faith which gave her life its quiet strength, and though neither may ever be to him what they were to her, yet for her sake he can never think of them save with reverence. A great man makes his boast in the Lord, and the mere example of his faith will sometimes avail to save multitudes from slipping their cables in the night of fear. In a hundred ways we live by each other's faith and hold each other up.

But the argument has a much wider reach than these simple illustrations may suggest. The Christian religion is not a thing of yesterday, it belongs to the ages and the generations; and while, of course, that is no sufficient reason for believing it true, it is a reason for not lightly setting it aside. Whatever has been long respected is probably respectable. A grey-headed truth has always claims upon our reverence. "The God of our fathers" speaks always as one having authority. A Swiss guide will sometimes cut upon his alpenstock the names of the chief heights which he has climbed with its aid. And the faith which claims our

## *Living by the Faith of Others*

assent has in like fashion been put to the proof. It comes to us sealed within and without with the names of those who have tried and proved its power. We receive it at the hands of men who can say: *That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.* Again be it said, this can be no substitute for our own faith, but it may be a mighty reinforcement of it. We may be driven and pushed by doubt until even our surest experiences begin to seem like idle phantoms of the brain; but when all around us we find men and women by the score who confirm our seeing and hearing by theirs, faith may lift up its head and laugh at its fears. There is a striking passage in one of James Smetham's "Letters," in which, after speaking of his own experience—"inwardly as great and as simple a fact as the facts of seeing and hearing"—he goes on to say, "And I have met with such scores and hundreds who

## *The Guests of God*

strike hands with me in life and death on these great matters that it is settled 'without controversy' to me."

Our fathers trusted in Thee :

They trusted, and Thou didst deliver them—

when with full understanding we can say that, faith is on the way to its own claim and confession, *My Lord and my God.*

### III

But the greatest helper of our faith is the faith of Jesus. We believe in God through Him, and not least through the example of His faith. The old translation of the Apostle's great saying—*the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me*—is, as we all now know, wholly inadequate. The Christian is not simply a sharer in Christ's faith ; he does not merely believe like Christ ; he believes in Christ. And yet the old translation has its truth : we do live by the faith of the Son of God. We run our race mindful not only of the great cloud of witnesses, but above

## *Living by the Faith of Others*

all of faith's pioneer and perfecter, Jesus, who (as Westcott says) "has Himself sustained the struggle which we bear." How little we realise the strain that the Cross must have put upon His faith! "Jesus the Conqueror reigns," we sing; but through what anguish of soul the Victor passed to His throne! Surely if to any man it is given by his faith to save his brother's soul, that power is His who endured the Cross and despised the shame.

There are always those for whom it is hard to repeat the old confessions of our faith and to mean them. They look up for God, but tears have made them blind. Then it may be one thing only will avail—*looking unto Jesus*. "I believe in God—the Father—Almighty": it was His faith even on the Cross; through Him it may be ours again to-day.







"DEAD ERE HIS PRIME"



#### XIV. "Dead ere his Prime"

**O**UR own hope was—the words are quoted from Moffatt's translation—that *He would be the redeemer of Israel; but He is dead, and that is three days ago!* It was grief's lament at a young man's grave. He for whom they mourned was but thirty-three. How they had loved Him, and what great things they had hoped of Him! But death, like a killing frost, had touched the tender blossom, and it was gone: *He is dead*, dead at thirty-three, life's work but just begun.

#### I

The present writer spent some hours lately in a room filled with the books of a brilliant young student who fell in the Great War. They spoke of work already done and of larger tasks

## *The Guests of God*

still to be attempted. Our hope was—*but he is dead.* On one of the walls of the room hung a portrait of F. W. Robertson in his pulpit—cut off at thirty-seven. It was a room to set one thinking, for there must be rooms like it in every corner of the land. Those who enter them and sit awhile in silence do not need to tell their thoughts; we know what they are thinking, we can almost hear the merciless hammering of the old questions: So young, so young—why did God let him die? “Why all this carefully drop-by-drop store, precious beyond calculation, emptied on the ground?” When a man comes to his grave *in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in in its season*, we do not murmur.

But to yield our breath,  
Life's purpose unfulfilled!—This  
is thy sting, O Death!

What can we say? Can anything be said? Is there any healing for our grievous hurt? Or, must we simply steel our hearts to submit as best we may?

## “ *Dead ere his Prime* ”

One thing must be said quite plainly. In one of the novels of the war there is a picture of a telegraph boy whistling up the drive to a house. A woman at the window catches her breath. With trembling fingers she tears open the buff envelope and reads. “There is no answer,” she says. “Lady, you are right. There is no answer, no answer this side of the Great Divide.” And to many of our questions that is all we can say—*there is no answer*; and they who think to help us with their cheap remedies and their much speaking are no true physicians. The problem which the unhealed wounds of war have thrust upon us is no new problem; the war intensified but did not create it: it does not date from August 1914; it is as old as sorrow and as thought. Of that aspect of it of which we are thinking at the moment—the mystery of the unfinished life—something may be said which, though of course it does not solve it, may help in some degree to reconcile us to it.

## *The Guests of God*

### II

The death on Calvary was a young man's death :

Not a golden hair was gray  
Upon His crucifixion day.

And Mary was there, the helpless witness of it all. Joseph was dead, and it was natural that she should have expected that Jesus would be with her to the end. And now He, too, is taken—and taken so. What so many are enduring to-day was Mary's sorrow in Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago. And was there no clinging to life on Christ's own part? Healthy in body, pure in mind, the pulse of life beating strong within His veins, was it not natural that He should shrink from death? To say this is not to give way to a false and feeble sentimentalism; this is the impression which the story of the Gospels itself leaves upon our minds. The cry in the Garden, *O My Father, if it be possible, let this*

## “ *Dead ere his Prime* ”

*cup pass away from Me*, was something more than the recoil from premature death ; but surely that too was in it. And would not Jesus cling to life, would He not shrink from death, because of the opportunity that longer life would give for doing His Father's will among men ? In the story of the visit of the Greeks, on the eve of His Passion, the Evangelist lets us see how deeply their coming had stirred our Lord's mind. May He not have had, as Dr. Stalker suggests, His dream of a mission beyond the narrow bounds of Palestine, unhampered by the petty jealousies and hates of the Jews ? And then the vision was blotted out by the shadow of swift-coming death. Is it any wonder that He cried, *Now is My soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour ?* But if for a moment He shrank, it was only for a moment : *For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.* And so He died—as our sons died—because necessity was laid upon Him and He could do no other.

*Per crucem ad lucem* : from the

## *The Guests of God*

Cross “where the young Prince of Glory died,” light falls on the dark mystery which haunts and saddens so many lives to-day—the mystery of the unfinished life. “But,” it may be asked, “how can the Cross help us? How does it soften our tragedy to be shown another and a greater? That loss is common to the race; that Jesus Himself was no exception does not make our own less bitter—rather more. The death of Jesus, so far from being the solution of our problem, is rather the aggravation of it, its supreme example—another stone in the heaped-up sorrow and injustice of the world.” And, of course, if the story of the Cross were only a story of brutal wrong done to an innocent man, if death were the end, it would be vain indeed to turn for comfort there. But death was not the end. *We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel—and He did* redeem Israel; He is doing it every day, and doing it by that very Cross by which men thought they had silenced Him for ever. And if God could do this by Mary’s Son,



## “ *Dead ere his Prime* ”

dead at thirty-three, may He not be able to make something, though we know not what or how, of these broken, unfinished lives of ours to-day ?

### III

Perhaps in the long run we are saved only by hope—the hope of immortality. This is the hope we must seek steadfastly to renew within us. And next to the New Testament it is the great Christian poets who can help us most. We open “*Lycidas*,” for example. This is how Milton begins his lament :

Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.

But before the end lamentation is turned to triumph, all the stops in Milton’s great organ are out, and we hear him singing :

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no  
more,

For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor ;  
So sinks the day-star in the ocean-bed,  
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,

## *The Guests of God*

And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled  
ore  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :  
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high  
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd  
the waves.

Or we turn to "In Memoriam"—and it is good to see signs that the reaction against Tennyson has spent itself, and that the great poet is coming to his own again. His poem is the record of his own questionings when the grave had suddenly opened at his feet. For long he lay stunned and prostrate. Then slowly, and still staggering under his load, he fought his way through the mists of doubt and pain to peace and light, until he could say :

those we call the dead  
Are breathers of an ampler day  
For ever nobler ends.

But if this is to be our faith—and no lesser faith will meet our need—some of us must revise some of our conceptions of heaven and the future life. "There is something singularly inane," Mr. R. H. Hutton once said,

“ *Dead ere his Prime* ”

“even un-English, in the ordinary idea which English believers in immortality so often seem to accept—that it will consist in mere rest and praise, a kind of happy trance.” But surely the life of the future will not be “a mere contrast to the very best life of earth”; rather will it be “a transfiguration of that very best life”; not a languid ecstasy, a paradise of inaction, but a state in which “the whole nature springs into a new vividness of activity.”

Somewhere, surely, afar,  
In the sounding labour-house vast  
Of being, is practised that strength  
Zealous, beneficent, firm !

Yes, *His servants serve Him*—there as well as here. God will not take the tools from our hands just when we have learned how to handle them. We carry with us into the next world capacity as well as character, and we may trust the great Overseer to see that it does not go unused. The training in school, the university, or in commerce—it was not wasted; it was all part of the preparation for

## *The Guests of God*

the larger life and nobler service of eternity. If it were not so He would have told us.

When Lady Frederick Cavendish saw Gladstone the first time after the terrible tidings had come of her husband's murder in Phoenix Park, she said to him—and as Dean Church truly says, no Roman or Florentine lady ever said a more heroic thing—“Uncle William, you did right to send him to Ireland.” And we did right when we sent forth our sons to die. Some day, it may be, God will let us see, as now we cannot see, how right we were.

“THE HOVERING ANGEL GIRL  
WITH GOLDEN WINGS”



XV. “ *The Hovering Angel Girt  
with Golden Wings*”      ~      ~

NOW we see not yet all things put under Him. The word is still true. There are days in all our lives when to the eyes of fear it seems to be the whole truth. But the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews saw beyond the shadows: *Now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus.* This is the word of hope that Christmas brings to every Christian heart; and this is the prayer with which to greet the sacred time:

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,  
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:  
O Father, touch the east, and light  
The light that shone when Hope was born.

I

What a book of hope the Bible is!  
Look at the Old Testament. It is

## *The Guests of God*

the literature of a people who passed through the strangest vicissitudes, and whose varying fortunes are reflected in the lights and shadows which chase each other so swiftly across the ancient page. Sometimes, so thick and sombre are the shadows, one wonders how the light can ever pierce them. But "the hovering angel girt with golden wings" is never far away. The national hope lived on with a toughness and tenacity that no extreme of disaster could destroy, and that made, in one man's eyes, the reading of his people's history one long lesson in hope: *Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.* In the New Testament hope has its place in the triad of the Christian graces. When an apostle gives thanks for his converts, he remembers their *patience of hope* as well as their *work of faith and labour of love*; when he prays for them, it is that they *may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.* Hope is the Christian's



## “ *The Hovering Angel* ”

helmet in the day of battle ; it is by hope he is saved. And to such a hope—a hope *set on Him*—all things are possible : *We shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him even as He is.* Nay, so magnificent is hope’s outlook that it anticipates the time when, in some unexplained way, *the whole creation which now groaneth and travaileth in pain, itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.* As Dean Church says, the Bible is from first to last an unbroken persistent call to hope.

### II

What is this hope of which the Bible is so full, and which Christianity has done so much to renew ? It is not another name for self-deceit ; it is not a faculty for seeing things other than as they are.

Hope tells a flattering tale,  
Delusive, vain, and hollow.

And there is a gay and facile optimism that shuts its ears and eyes

## *The Guests of God*

to the harsh cries and ugly sounds of life, and dwells within a painted dream-world of its own; but that is not hope. Hope is not blind; it looks on life with eyes wide open. But hope sees not only the cloud, it sees the light under the cloud. It sees the broken altars of Jehovah, and the seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal. It sees the beleaguered city and the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, and it knows that they *that be with us are more than they that be with them. We see not yet all things put under Him*, hope cries, *but we see Jesus*. And it is the factor that all save hope forget that turns the tide of battle.

Let us look back and see how often in the Church's history the man of hope has been justified. In that rough, fierce world in which the Epistle to the Hebrews was written there can have been few frailer things in the eyes of men than the little Christian Church. What madness it must have seemed to match its feebleness against the might of Rome! Think of St.

## “ *The Hovering Angel* ”

Paul entering one of the great cities of the Empire—Ephesus or Corinth or Philippi: “ Who could dream that this travel-stained man, going from one tent-maker’s door to another seeking for work, was carrying the future of the world beneath his robe ? ” But the traveller himself never doubted. *We see not yet all things put under Him—not yet*: it is the word of a man who knows that he is on the winning side, and can wait. And so it proved: three centuries later, and great, proud Rome bowed her head before the Galilean conqueror.

Or see, again, what happened in the fourth and fifth centuries when the fierce barbarians of the North overran the Empire—now, in name at least, a Christian empire—and threatened the very existence, not only of religion, but of all civilised order. Which in those wild and lawless days would have seemed the judgment of sober good sense—“ the despair which saw only the frightful mischief, or the bold hope which saw in the barbarians the seed of a great

## *The Guests of God*

Christendom" ? But again it is despair that would have been wrong ; it is hope that would have been right.

Or turn to our own land in the eighteenth century. Once more it seemed as if faith were smitten to the ground never to rise again. Every one remembers Bishop Butler's sombre judgment in the first edition of the "Analogy," repeated fifteen years later, when he spoke of "the general decay of religion in this nation, which," he said, "is now observed by every one, and has been for some time the complaint of all serious persons." And then one recalls with a thrill of wonder that these were the very years of the great Evangelical Revival. There are surely few stranger and more instructive contrasts in Christian history than that of the grave and learned bishop in his palace, fearing for the very life of Christianity, while just outside his palace walls, had he but known it, all England was breaking into song, the glad, new song of salvation :

On every side are gathered to Him  
The weary and burdened, the reprobate race.

## “ *The Hovering Angel* ”

Once more it is despair mourning over what seemed the black and barren earth that was wrong; it is hope rejoicing in the green promise of the spring that was right.

And the secret of hope's brave continuance is this: it will not leave out God. *Having no hope and without God in the world*: the one is but the obverse of the other. If God the sun is blotted out from the sky, hope the flower springs no more in the earth. *We see not yet all things put under Him*—hope itself must often say that, but hope always sees Jesus, and seeing Him it can look beyond the passing hour to the day when the last enemy shall be subdued and God shall be all in all.

Thrice blessed is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is on the field when He  
Is most invisible.

This is the message of Advent, the gospel of the Incarnation: God is with us. Our way may be in darkness, God Himself may be invisible; but we are not left to ourselves,

## *The Guests of God*

*the Dayspring from on high hath  
visited us.*

### III

We sometimes speak of hope as one of the Christian graces ; but we ought to keep in mind the contrast, which Dr. Denney has aptly pointed out, between these and the graces of the Greeks. The latter are beautiful, but their beauty is aesthetic, not spiritual. They are lovely as a group of statuary is lovely, but their nature is utterly unlike that of the three powers of the Christian character. "The Greek graces are essentially beauties ; but the Christian graces are essentially powers ; they are new virtues, and forces which God has implanted in the soul that it may be able to do His work in the world." And it is for us to cultivate and exercise these great powers of the soul. Let us learn to distrust even our own counsels when they spring from despondency. Wisdom comes with hope, for hope lifts up our hearts to the unseen Helper who is always with us.



“ *The Hovering Angel* ”

For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win ;  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin.

With such a hope, though our way  
may be through the desert and the  
path stony and sore to our feet, by  
our side will run the sweet waters to  
which we may turn for refreshment  
and strength.







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